

# **THE INVASION OF SICILY**

## **OPERATION "HUSKY"**

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### **PART II**

#### **THE EASTERN TASK FORCE**

#### **NARRATIVE OF THE ASSAULT LANDINGS AND MAINTENANCE OF THE BEACHES**

**CHAPTERS IV TO VI**

**SECTIONS 20-44**

## CHAPTER IV

## 20. FORCE "A". ORGANIZATION

(Ref. Plans, 4, 5)

Force "A" under the command of Rear-Admiral Troubridge in H.M.S. *Bulolo*, was organized, assembled and loaded in Middle East ports. The convoys carried the two Divisions (5th and 50th) destined for the assault in the Acid area and the 231st Brigade for the Bark East assault. Attached troops were also embarked, namely, one tank battalion and two commandos for Acid North; one armoured regiment and one commando for Acid South. (See S.15.)

The Middle East convoys of Force "A" were organized as follows:—

Convoy	No. of Ships	Departure Port	Date	Remarks
M.W.S.36	30 M.T. 3 oilers <sup>1</sup> 2 L.S.G.	Alexandria ..	3rd July ..	Assault.
M.W.F.36	20 personnel ..	Port Said ..	5th July ..	Assault.
M.W.S.37	30 M.T. 2 oilers <sup>1</sup>	Alexandria ..	6th July ..	Follow-up.
M.W.F.37	12 personnel ..	Alexandria ..	9th July ..	Follow-up.

In addition 15 L.S.T.(2)s, fully laden, sailed from Alexandria for Tripoli on 24th June in convoy M.K.S. 16. An American pontoon was towed by H.M.S. *Romney*, but on 26th June the tow broke in half and the pontoon eventually arrived at Tripoli in tow of H.M.S. *Lismore*.

The 60 M.T. ships had loaded at Alexandria, Haifa and Beirut, in three flights of 20 ships each, starting respectively on the 4th, 10th and 16th June.

The 32 personnel ships embarked their troops at Suez and passed through the Canal on 30th June, 1st and 2nd July.

The passage of the Assault convoys to the rendezvous off Malta, was marred only by the torpedoing, off Derna, of the M.T. ship, *Shahjehan*, in M.W.S. 36 at 1110 on 6th July. Efforts were made to tow her into Tobruk but she sank at 0220, 7th July. An enemy aircraft sighted the convoy at 1250/7.

Admiral Ramsay (N.C.E.T.F.) assumed operational control of all ships and craft in the E.T.F. at noon D — 1. He had sailed from Malta in the head-quarter's ship *Antwerp* at 0630, to witness the concentration of the convoys from the Middle East and the United Kingdom and their junction with the landing craft groups from Sousse, Tripoli and Malta.

The weather was good in the early morning of 9th July, but thereafter deteriorated throughout the day until by evening the north-westerly wind had increased to force 6 raising a short steep sea that greatly affected the landing craft, slowing them down and driving them to leeward. This factor caused some anxiety concerning the conditions prevailing on the beaches but did not seriously suggest postponement of the operation.

No reports of enemy aircraft were received during D — 1 and the *Antwerp* returned to Malta to land the Chief of Combined Operations, sailing again after dark for the Eastern Task Force assault area, south of Syracuse.

<sup>1</sup> Joined from Malta.

## 21. FORCE "A". THE APPROACH

(Ref. Plans 4, 5)

## 9th July—D — 1

At 0600, four L.C.I.(L) from Tripoli joined convoy M.W.F. 36. During the forenoon convoy M.W.S. 36 was sighted and both convoys reached their rendezvous positions at noon.

The north-westerly wind freshened in the afternoon from force 4 to 6, the sea increasing from 30 to 41. At 1730, 22 L.C.I.(L)s, four M.M/S. and four M/S joined, but the majority of these small craft soon dropped astern. When the L.C.T. convoy was overtaken at 1900, it was only making five knots. Half an hour later the gunboats *Aphis*, *Scarab*, *Cockchafer* and *Flores* (D) with 12 H.D.M.L.s joined. Rear-Admiral Troubridge (N.C.F. "A") states that, even if the L.C.T.s had been obliged to heave to, he would have accepted the delay and launched the assault in spite of the absence of the supporting arms.

About 1930, the wind slackened though the sea remained choppy. Mount Etna was sighted at 2030, when the weather was recorded as—the wind, force 4, sea 31, visibility good, no moon, and a clear starlit sky.

At 2328, the port wing column of convoy M.W.F. 36, consisting of the ships carrying the Bark East assault troops parted company. Two minutes later transmissions from the Acid marking submarine (*Unruffled*) were picked up.

Approaching the release positions the smaller craft were all greatly affected by the weather conditions, the troops were suffering considerably from seasickness and from the seas breaking over them.

## 10th July—D-day

Shortly after midnight a large number of bomber and transport aircraft of the Airborne Division passed overhead on their way to drop paratroops near Syracuse. Some of the gliders which had been slipped prematurely came down in the sea; though many of their men were rescued by the ships and craft, unfortunately others were lost.

At 0016, the *Winchester Castle* (S.N.O.L.(J)) and ships of the Acid South assault parted company, followed at 0021 by the *Reina Del Pacifico* (S.N.O.L.(H)) and ships of Acid Centre assault. The *Bulolo* (N.C.F. "A"), with the ships of the Acid North assault stopped engines at 0045, when the *Unruffled* bore four cables on the port bow. To assist the L.C.T. groups to get their bearings the *Bulolo* proceeded to a position 180°, Murro di Porco 10'.

At 0120, starshell, searchlights and gunflashes were visible in the direction of Syracuse.

## 22. THE ASSAULT. ACID AREA

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A)

In the Acid North sector bad bunching occurred, as some ships failed to get the signal to stop and the resultant disorder led to difficulty in forming up the L.C.A. of the preliminary assault. In the absence of the H.D.M.L.s, the squadron officer in an L.C.S.(M) led in 20 minutes late. However, time was partly made up and the first L.C.A. beached at H + 10 minutes to the south of Punta del Cane (How sector) whence the beach defences of George sector were taken from the rear.

The main assault flotillas also experienced difficulty in forming up and, after concentrating at the dispersal point, were released about a mile from the shore. Their approach was carried out successfully, one flotilla beaching undetected 20 yards on either side of a pill-box. Their arrival stirred the beach defences to activity and the flotillas were heavily fired on while withdrawing but had no casualties. The L.C.A.s with the reserve companies waited 15 minutes at the dispersal point before following in to the beach.

All the main assault troops were landed between 0405 and 0415. The reserve battalion beached 25 minutes late at 0425, the Brigade headquarters landed at 0445. Ancillary troops and other reserves beached between 0510 and 0545, nearly an hour late.

#### Acid Centre

In the How sector, the personnel ships stopped in a position one mile to the south and east of the correct release position. The H.D.M.L. for pilotage duty failed to arrive before the assault flight had left at 0105; her absence, as well as that of a Folbot, seriously handicapped the 15th Brigade's assault. The *Eskimo* led the two L.C.A. Flotillas until 0150, when she stopped on detecting a sonic buoy. At 0230, as the landing craft passed, she signalled their course to the beach. Apparently she had been set to the southward as the course indicated took the landing craft to the Folbot in Jig sector 1½ miles south of the How beaches.

During their run in the L.C.A.s had lost formation and become badly scattered. When they sighted the flashing light of the Jig sector Folbot at 0315, the squadron officer, the deputy/S.N.O.L. and military S.O. after conferring, decided to carry out the assault on the How beaches with the available craft. The three L.C.A.s present were despatched northward while others were rounded up and directed to their proper beaches. During their run northward these craft came under ineffective gun and machine-gun fire from several points. The first craft beached on How Amber beach at 0355, 70 minutes late. Opposition encountered during the landing collapsed immediately the defenders' positions were attacked. Three L.C.A.s disembarked their troops at Jig Green beach and the remainder were sent on to How Green beach, where two craft of the second wave had landed at 0345. Finding this beach, which was covered with boulders, most unsuitable, the beachmaster, doubting whether it was the right one, withdrew under fire and went to How Amber beach. Later he returned to How Green beach where, with the aid of the L.C.S.(M).s he assisted the military in clearing out the enemy and established his party ashore.

Only three L.C.I.s were in company on reaching the release position and their loading proved difficult. However, they made up time and landed their troops at the moment they were wanted. No. 179, carrying the beach Brick units was disabled at How Red beach by a 6-in. howitzer hit below water and had five wounded. No. 128 carrying troops for Jig sector beached in a small cove between How Amber and Green beaches. After landing her troops she was hit and set on fire, the coxswain being killed and six ratings wounded.

All the assault troops and beach Brick personnel were ashore by first light, when coast defence batteries inland from Amber beach began shelling the beaches inflicting casualties and hindering the development of the beaches until the *Eskimo*, opening fire at 0545, silenced a concealed battery north-east of Avola and temporarily relieved the situation. After 0635, she twice engaged a battery firing on How Green beach, causing an explosion and a fire which finally reduced it to silence.

Two Me.109s machine-gunning the beaches were engaged by L.C.S. and other craft. By 0645, the development of the beaches was assured, but no supporting arms were ashore as the foreshore presented great difficulty to the landing of vehicles.

At Amber beach, which was to be developed as the main beach, while bulldozers prepared the routes and exits the first L.C.T.s were called in at 0700. At Green beach the problem was similar; though two satisfactory points were found for L.C.T.s, vehicles could not negotiate the boulders until bulldozers arrived from Amber beach to clear a passage. Further along the beach, however, L.C.M.s were discharged successfully, the vehicles using a prepared lateral roadway.

#### Acid South

In the Jig sector the personnel ships stopped in the release position at 0044, and the first flight of assault craft were away almost on time. They had difficulty in preserving formation and only made 3-4 knots. The sonic buoy was not heard in this sector. The first wave touched down some 30 minutes late on Green beach and about 400 yards to the south of Amber beach. The Folbot off Green beach proved invaluable, but there was none at Amber beach. After beaching, though heavy gunfire was experienced and searchlights were active at first, the Italians soon abandoned their defences.

The L.C.T.s were also late in arriving (0500), however, the first three were sent in immediately and the rest in due course. At first only one could be beached on account of the soft sandy nature of the beach, but later three were able to beach at a time. The exits were bad until good work by the beach parties improved them.

### 23 CONSOLIDATION OF THE BEACHES

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A)

Landing success signals were made from How Green beach at 0255, by No. 3 Commando at 0300, from Jig Amber at 0320, and from George sector at 0345. The S.R. squadron<sup>1</sup> reported at 0425 having destroyed the coast defence battery at Murro di Porco.

At daylight, the beaches, especially Jig Green and Amber and in the How sector came under desultory machine gun, mortar and 6-in. howitzer fire of varying intensity. As this resistance was on the whole slight and no reports of mines had been received, the N.C.F. "A" at 0505, ordered all shipping to move inshore to the anchorage.

At 0619, the 50th Division reported: "All troops landed, capture and mopping up of beach defences completed. Most beaches being shelled".

At 0730 convoy M.W.S. 36 anchored off the beaches, having been delayed an hour by weather.

Ships of the bombardment group, had been engaging the coast defences from time to time and all the shore batteries were silenced by about 0800, except one gun in an unknown position, whose occasional shells fell in the sea.

By 0937 the situation at Acid was reported by the N.C.F. "A" as follows: "Landing of personnel continuing satisfactorily. Delay in beaching L.S.T.s due to small amount of available beach. Hope to begin unloading shortly."

<sup>1</sup> Special Raiding Squadron (S.A.S. Regt.).

At 1008, his further report stated : " All beaches captured. Progress of 5th and 50th Divisions satisfactory. Both headquarters ashore. Avola, Cassibili, Casa Nuovo captured. Shelling of beaches ceased."

In the George sector, when the signal to move to the inshore anchorage was received, the L.C.A.s were loading for the first flight of the ferry service. The movement was delayed until they were clear at 0605 and though stopped temporarily when a shore battery fired six rounds at the ships, all ships had anchored by 0740. The M.T. ships of convoy M.W.S. 36, on arrival, followed in and anchored by 0830, when they began discharging.

Four L.S.T.s arrived with convoy M.W.S. 36 ; L.S.T. No. 414 towing a pontoon proceeded inshore where it was fixed in position between her and the shore within an hour. All the L.S.T.s except No. 407 completed clearing during the day. No. 407 carrying a G.C.I. set anchored off How beach and discharged it there during the following day.

The *Sobieski*, *Monarch of Bermuda*, *Duchess of Bedford* and *Dunera*, having completed discharge by 1230 joined a convoy for Malta which sailed at 1530. The ships remaining in George sector were the *Bulolo*, *Bergensfiord* (with the Syracuse port party), *Ulster Monarch*, *Prins Albert* and *Brittany*.

The first air attack on the beaches was made by four F.W.190s at 1314. The shipping was attacked at 1630 by 40 Ju.88s, near misses causing casualties in the *Bergensfiord* and L.S.T. 407. At 1420 the *Erebus* engaged and destroyed a strong point east of Punta Grande.

Three more air attacks occurred during D-day in the last of which at 2205, the Hospital ship *Talamba*, lying fully lighted about 5 miles off to seaward, was deliberately bombed and sunk with considerable loss of life, her survivors were rescued by the *Carlisle*, *Eskimo* and *Tartar*.

At noon, the S.N.O.L. (G) (Captain E. V. Lees) transferred to the *Ulster Monarch*. Communications with the beaches had been rapidly established, the main signal station being set up and working by 0510.

At How Sector, where the L.C.T.s arrived late at the release position, the first pair were sent to Amber beach at 0410. As the beach was then under fire they were ordered to lie off and did not beach until 0700. The personnel ships *Reina del Pacifico*, *Tegelberg* and *Dilwara* anchored at 0800, half a mile off Amber beach. A ferry service was begun at once, and all three ships were cleared by 1015. The S.N.O.L. (H) (Captain C. R. G. Allen) transferred to the *Brittany* at noon and all the L.S.I.s in the How sector had left the anchorage an hour before the first heavy bombing raid took place.

The M.T. ships followed the L.S.I.s in to the anchorage and without delay commenced discharging by L.C.M.s in a steady increasing flow. About 1600, the *George R. Clarke* was straddled in a heavy bombing attack which caused unimportant damage and some casualties.

Four L.S.T.s which arrived with the M.T. ships, anchored until they could be sent in to Amber beach. The approach there was suitable, but vehicles could not be landed until the foreshore and exits had been developed. At 1430, the first L.S.T.s carrying the pontoon bridges beached and two finished discharging before dark.

Only one of the allotted two L.C.F.s arrived in How sector. She was late and opposition had ceased, but, from a position close inshore between Green and Amber beaches she effectively provided close range air defence of the ships and beaches.

At the close of D-day the tactical phase, so far as the beaches were concerned, was over, as the 15th Brigade had advanced some miles from their vicinity. Beach development was proceeding well, though the rate of discharge of L.C.T. continued to be slow, hindering the follow-up of vehicles from the M.T. ships. At Amber beach the L.C.M.s had two discharging points and at Green beach three, with two exits for vehicles. Red beach proving practically useless, all traffic there was transferred to Amber beach and Red beach was only used for repair of damaged craft.

At dusk, craft fitted with smoke apparatus took up positions for covering the anchorage. The first of the night raids, which henceforward became a regular feature, occurred at 2045, however smoke was used effectively and no ship suffered damage in How sector.

At Jig sector, though the M.T. ships arrived an hour late, all shipping had closed the shore and anchored by 0730. The M.T. ships loaded their L.C.M.s at the release position, while those from the gantry ships, being pre-loaded, went in ahead.

Between first light and 0700, Green beach, despite the use of smoke, was subjected to mortar and 6-in. Howitzer fire from the northward. Shipping did not come under fire, but one L.C.I.(L) was hit four times suffering 40 casualties.

It was found to be impossible to discharge the L.S.T.s without pontoons and as these arrived in a damaged state much hard work was necessary before discharge was completed.

The S.N.O.L. (J) (Captain P. S. Smith) transferred to the *Prins Albert* at 1335, and all the personnel ships were sailed at 1430 to join the Malta convoy.

By 1600, the forward troops were reported about five miles north-west of George sector and the area of Cape Murro di Porco had been cleared of the enemy.

An air raid which occurred at 1630, the heaviest of all the daylight raids, was presumably intended to catch the large liners, but these had left one hour previously. At 1700, the *Uganda* engaged batteries north of Syracuse.

During seven bright moonlight nights, smoke screens were employed before last light and before first light to screen the shipping. They proved most effective and no ships were damaged in the fairly heavy air attacks.

Syracuse was reported to have been occupied by our troops at 2100.

## 24. OCCUPATION OF SYRACUSE. WORK ON THE BEACHES

11th July—D + 1

To consolidate the military occupation of Syracuse, Fleet sweepers and B.Y.M.S. escorted by the *Nubian* and *Tartar* were despatched (0630) to sweep the entrance channel and the N.C.F. "A" with the Syracuse Port party embarked in the *Eskimo*. At 0900, the 151st Brigade was reported to have occupied Noto. During the night the Hospital ship *ABA* reported an attack by aircraft.

The *Whitehaven* entered Syracuse harbour at 1030, followed at 1100 by the N.C.F. "A" in the *Cromarty*. No signs of enemy activity were observed ; the boom was intact, but the gear was rotten and the boom vessel not in working order. There was no evidence of mining and only one case of sabotage.

The task of sweeping was quickly performed and by 1250, the channel was reported clear. The *Uganda* and *Mauritius* (1615) bombarded enemy positions in the vicinity of Priolo and Syracuse.

At 2345 the N.C.E.T.F. signalled that Augusta was being evacuated. In the George sector the pontoon bridge was being used with great success, while the R.E. continued developing the roadway and causeway. An attempt, however, to blow a passage through the sand-bar off Red beach with a large Bangalore torpedo proved a complete failure. Fortunately three L.S.T.s arrived with *Dukws*, which joined in the ferry service. The *Bergensfjord* completed discharge and was sailed for Malta.

During the night sporadic air-raids continued, but did not interfere with the work of discharge. Much ammunition was wasted by M.T. ships disregarding signals to stop firing.

In How sector at first light, when three L.S.T.s beached, No. 407, which had been bombed and lost her kedge anchor, ran hard and fast up on the beach.

During an air raid at 1900, the *Joseph C. Cannon* which had completed unloading, was hit by a bomb in No. 5 hold which penetrated her bottom. After temporary repairs she was able to leave next day with the convoy for Malta. The discharge of M.T. and stores progressed well and delays were made up.

At Jig sector the work of unloading continued as fast as possible. The M.T. ship *Baarn* (D) was set on fire in No. 1 hold by splinters from a near miss during an air attack at 1235. As she had ammunition on board, she was sunk by the *Tartar*, after an attempt to tow from aft by the *Carlisle* had failed.

#### 12th July—D + 2

The first appearance of E-Boats was at 0215, when the *Aldenham* reported sighting three off Cape Murro di Porco, but they retired at 0300, without making an attack.

At 0430, the N.C.F. "A" (Rear-Admiral Troubridge) embarked in the *Eskimo* with the intention of proceeding to Augusta, but at 0450, when a hit by a 250-lb. bomb started a fire in her after fuel tanks and caused 19 fatal and 22 other casualties, he went first to the *Mauritius* and then to the *Exmoor*. After the *Aldenham* had transferred the *Eskimo*'s casualties to a hospital ship, the *Eskimo* was taken in tow by the *Tartar* and, escorted by the *Miaoules* (G), arrived at Malta at 1715.

The time had come for sweeping a channel into Augusta and at 0530, the sweepers commenced their task while the *Erebus* engaged targets in the area. Priolo was reported to have been captured by the 17th Brigade at 0720.

The *Uganda* and *Mauritius* bombarded Melilli at 0800, and later with the *Erebus* and *Orion* engaged targets near Augusta. By 0914, the channel to Augusta was reported clear and at 1035, the *Exmoor* flying the N.C.F. "A"'s flag entered the port. She encountered accurate fire at short range, from a field gun or tank, which obliged her to make a hurried withdrawal. The N.C.F. "A" then transferred to the *Bulolo*.

Italian submarines searching for victims suffered ~~their first loss~~ at 1252, when the minesweepers on A/S patrol off Cape Panagia, in 37° 06' N., 15° 25' E., attacked the submarine *Bronzo* which had surfaced near the *Seaham*. Close range fire from the *Seaham*, *Boston* and later from the *Poole*, scored many hits on the *Bronzo*'s conning tower and hull, killing the captain, three officers and five men; other members of the crew jumped overboard when the *Seaham* and *Boston* ran alongside. A boarding party from the *Seaham* forced two of the *Bronzo*'s crew to stop her engines, and the capture was swiftly concluded, 36 prisoners being taken. No attempt had been made to fire scuttling charges.

The *Seaham* took the prize in tow and the flotilla set course for Syracuse. They had barely started when at 1340, the *Poole* reported sighting a periscope and the *Poole*, *Cromarty* and *Boston* attacked with depth charges. Air bubbles and oil were seen and it was thought that the submarine was probably damaged. Other contacts were attacked without results at 1455, 1505 and 1518 by the *Poole* and *Boston* after the minesweepers had resumed their patrol.

At 1430, Admiral Ramsay (N.C.E.T.F.) visited the N.C.F. "A" (Rear-Admiral Troubridge) in the *Bulolo*. The *Exmoor*, *Kanaris*, H.D.M.L. 1252 and B.Y.M.S. 09 entered Augusta harbour at 1540 covered by the *Uganda*, *Mauritius* *Orion* and *Erebus* which remained outside under way. Two officers and a rating who landed hoisted an ensign on the cathedral. A gun which opened fire hit the *Exmoor*, starting a fire and inflicting casualties of two killed and six wounded. The destroyers, while withdrawing immediately, engaged the tank causing the trouble and silenced it, but, knowing that troops of the 17th Brigade were entering Augusta, fire on targets ashore had to be restricted. Another attempt to enter the harbour was made at 1730, in which the *Brocklesby*, with the N.C.E.T.F. and N.C.F. "A" on board took part, but an accurate fire from a 4-gun battery forced them to withdraw. At 1930, the *Ulster Monarch* escorted by the *Tetcott* and two M.G.B.s arrived and landed the S.R. Squadron at Augusta. A good deal of opposition, which was encountered from light H.V. guns and machine gun posts, was effectively neutralized by the *Tetcott*, *Nubian* and *Tartar*, and next morning Augusta was finally reported to be in our hands.

During the night intermittent air attacks were made on the shipping, both flares and torpedoes being dropped without causing damage.

At George sector three L.C.M.s were sent to Syracuse to transfer casualties to hospital ships. An additional beach, named Blue, was opened in the northern part of the bay, which with a causeway built there proved satisfactory, though the lack of approaches and shortage of working companies delayed landing stores for some hours.

Three L.S.T.s arrived and were berthed on the pontoon at How sector. When all efforts to refloat No. 407 had proved unavailing, the S.N.O.L. (H) transferred to her as his headquarters ship.

At 0450/12, the M.T. ship, *Ocean Peace*, off Jig sector had been straddled by near misses, whose splinters penetrated No. 1 hold setting petrol on fire. There were no casualties, but finally she had to be sunk by the *Tetcott*.

#### 13th July—D + 3

Nine enemy aircraft were destroyed during night raids. Convoy M.W.S. 37 anchored off Acid sector at 0800 and convoy M.W.F. 37 entered Syracuse at 0930. Twelve empty M.T. ships were sailed for Tripoli and the *Joseph C. Cannon* to Malta. The *Erebus* was ordered (1051) to bombard Catania airport at extreme range. The *Roberts* joined the flag of the N.C.F. "A" in Acid North (1130).

The berthing and discharge of convoy M.W.F. 37 at Syracuse was performed most efficiently. Sixteen L.C.I. (L) and other miscellaneous craft were used to complete disembarkation and unloading, thus permitting all the ships to be sailed by 1830.

Air Headquarters, Malta, was requested to provide separate air cover for Syracuse to be controlled from the *Largs*, headquarter ship of Rear-Admiral McGrigor who assumed the title of Flag Officer, Sicily (F.O. Sy.) at 1400.

The C.S. 15 (Rear-Admiral C. Harcourt) reported that the bombarding ships had been shelled at full range just north of Cape Campolato while firing at Lentini. At 1030, No. 3 Commando embarked from Syracuse in the *Prins Albert* and proceeded at 1900 to land at Punta Murazzo. The *Tetcott* covered the assault landing craft at 2304, shelling enemy batteries and machine gun posts. At about 0120/14, three E-Boats attacked the *Prins Albert*, but were driven off by the *Tetcott* which destroyed one.

At 2000 the port party, which had been sent to Augusta during the forenoon, was withdrawn by the N.O.I.C. as the town was still under fire. The *Erebus* bombarded Catania at 2130. At 2227, the C.S. 15 reported, that the situation at Augusta was still uncertain and that ships should not enter the harbour.

From George sector four empty M.T. ships were sailed (0630) to join the convoy for Tripoli, two of them carrying 300 prisoners of war each. Between 0800 and 0900, nine M.T. ships of convoy M.W.S. 37 arrived and commenced discharge. Blue beach was now working successfully.

Three M.T. ships left How sector to join the Tripoli convoy and ten arrived from convoy M.W.S. 37.

During a heavy air raid at about 1100 at Jig sector, the *Timothy Pickering* received a direct hit in the after hold and blew up; the explosion damaging the *O. Henry* and covering the sea with blazing oil. Her casualties were heavy, only about 30 survivors being rescued. This disaster affected the morale of the dock operating personnel and delayed unloading, the men refusing to work in the holds during air raids. The *Timothy Pickering* had just arrived, and neither personnel nor stores had been discharged. Her bows remained above water until she was finally sunk by a destroyer. The S.N.O.L. (J) transferred to a house ashore where the communications were good.

## 25. OCCUPATION OF AUGUSTA. ACID SOUTH BEACHES CLOSED DOWN

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 14)

### 14th July—D + 4

The landing of No. 3 Commando at Punta Murrazzo, eight miles south of Catania was entirely successful in attaining its objective.<sup>1</sup> The *Prins Albert* and *Ulster Monarch* re-embarked the Commandos and returned to Syracuse during the forenoon. The usual dawn air attack was less intense; the night fighters' successful work caused great confidence and the A/S patrol took a toll of low flying torpedo-bombers.

The beaches of Jig sector had now closed down and all personnel and craft been transferred to Syracuse. The N.C.F. "A" (Rear-Admiral Troubridge) handed over the conduct of operations north of Syracuse to the F.O. Sy. (Rear-Admiral McGrigor). During the night of 13th/14th an airborne landing, operation "Marston", was carried out to seize objectives near Catania. Although the troop-carrying aircraft should have passed well clear of the shipping, many were fired on in error and a number of survivors from aircraft shot down were picked up during the next day. Fire discipline on this and other occasions was remarked on as being poor, especially in the M.T. ships.

Ten ships of convoy M.W.S. 37 were sent to discharge at Syracuse and the remaining 11 ships of M.W.S. 36 were sailed for Tripoli. The *Roberts* escorted by the *Adrias* (G) and *Miaoules* (G) was detached (0730) to bombard positions in the Augusta area. The *Carlisle* assumed duty as A.A. guard-ship at Syracuse. At 1330, the port party returned to Augusta.

<sup>1</sup> Positions from which guns had been firing on Augusta.

Air activity during the day was considerable and much ammunition was expended in firing barrages. During the night fairly heavy air attacks were made on the Acid shipping and the M.T. ships *Tower Hill* and *Fort George* had some casualties from near misses.

Four M.T. ships, were sailed in the Tripoli convoy from George sector. Having been over-loaded they still had some stores stowed in their deep tanks which could not be unloaded.<sup>1</sup> An army request for 5·5-in. guns and ammunition necessitated working the *William Patterson* all night, as they were at the bottom of her hold. The S.N.O.L. (G) stated that it proved to be impossible to observe priorities unless ships were tactically loaded. The last three M.T. ships of convoy M.W.S. 36 cleared from How sector.

### 15th July—D + 5

The Commander-in-Chief signalled that all the aerodromes in Sicily were cleared of enemy aircraft and consequently the numbers likely to be encountered by day would be small, but torpedo-bombers were still operating. The strictest fire discipline was essential, and only clearly identified hostile aircraft should be fired on.

The N.C.E.T.F. (Admiral Ramsay) directed the N.C.F. "A" (Rear-Admiral Troubridge) to proceed in the *Bulolo* to Syracuse, where the situation was unsatisfactory, and take charge of the port organisation, as the F.O. Sy. (Rear-Admiral McGrigor) in the *Largs* was urgently required at Augusta. Meanwhile Captain C. R. G. Allen, S.N.O.L. (H), would take charge of the whole Acid area.

The main 8th Army headquarters was closed at Malta and transferred to the Syracuse area during the day. The N.C.F. "A" visited the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, who had arrived in the Acid area.

Four empty M.T. ships of convoy M.W.S. 37 were sailed from George sector (1530), two of them carrying prisoners of war.

At How sector L.S.T. 407 was towed off by the tug *Restive*, and three M.T. ships which had completed discharge were sailed. After the departure of the N.C.F. "A" at 1800 for Syracuse the S.N.O.L. (H) assumed command in the Acid area.

### 16th July—D + 6

In air raids on Syracuse between 0045 and 0400, the *Poole* and *Boston* were near missed and had some casualties.

At 0945, the tug *Restive* proceeded to the assistance of the *Cleopatra*, torpedoed about 40' off the coast, but her services were not required.<sup>2</sup> The F.O. Sy. proceeded to Augusta at 1015. Four empty ships from convoy M.W.S. 37 sailed for Malta.

A meeting of the Port Defence Committee was held in the *Bulolo*. The *Cameronia* arrived at Syracuse (2000). The *Restive* towed the damaged L.C.T.s Nos. 300 and 410 from George sector to Syracuse.

<sup>1</sup> In complete disregard of the recommendations made after operation "Torch."

<sup>2</sup> See Section 61.

**17th July—D + 7**

In a heavy air raid on Syracuse at 0215, the M.T. ship *William T. Colman* was damaged and there were several near misses amongst the shipping. The *Kerrara* reported (0330) an E-Boat attack outside Augusta harbour. The commander-in-chief signalled (0730) that it was important to get the station back to normal routine as soon as possible, and that a delay of 24 hours in sailing convoys could be accepted in order to ensure the final clearing of beaches.

At 1645 a large fire broke out at the fuelling point, Molo San Antonio, Syracuse, endangering the M.T. ship *Teucer*, which had to be shifted. The fire was got under control by 1730. At 2000, the N.C.F. "A" in the *Bulolo* with the *Cameronia* and three escorts sailed for Malta. When he left, the situation in the Acid area was: The F.O. Sy. had assumed general control of shipping movements on the east coast of Sicily, and was also supervising the organisation of the port of Augusta. Captain Grey had assumed the duties of N.O.I.C. of the port of Augusta. Captain C. R. G. Allen (S.N.O.L. (H)) had taken charge of the Syracuse, and Captain C. R. G. Allen (S.N.O.L. (H)) had taken charge of the Acid beaches. The Jig sector beaches had been closed, but George and How Acid beaches were still working at full capacity. The intention was to close these beaches on 24th July, but the decision to land the 78th Division necessitated their working at full pressure until 5th August. In addition, 11 ships of the convoys K.M.S. 19B and 19C were discharged during that period.

Activity in the Acid area after 17th July developed into an organised routine and no longer had the character of a tactical operation.

**18th July—D + 8**

At the Blue beach, George sector, a 60-ft. causeway and two Somerfelt track roadways were completed. Six M.T. ships arrived, three for How and three for George sectors. All the dumb barges ex-M.T. ships were towed to Syracuse. An L.C.I. (L), damaged by shellfire on D-day, sailed for Malta escorted by the *Eday*.

**19th July—D + 9**

At 0050, L.C.T. 570, in George sector loaded with petrol was set on fire by shell fragments during an air raid. All her crew were saved, including one man who had slept on through the fire and exploding ammunition overhead. Four M.T. ships were sailed to discharge at Syracuse. The N.C.E.T.F. arrived in the *Abdiel* and inspected the Acid beaches.

**20th/21st July—D + 10/D + 11**

The balloon barrage in George sector was transferred to Syracuse. Six M.T. ships carrying prisoners of war were sailed to join the convoy for Malta.

**22nd July—D + 12**

During an air raid at 0330, the *Samuel Parker* in How sector was near-missed and had two fatal casualties.

The S.N.O.L. (H) in L.S.T. 407 went to the assistance of the *Empire Moon*, on fire 7½ miles south of C. Murro di Porco. She was taken in tow by the *Oriana*, tug. Three M.T. ships sailed for Malta.

**23rd July—D + 13**

The *Hurworth* and *Aldenham* were despatched (1430) to search for the U-Boat that had torpedoed the *Newfoundland*.<sup>1</sup> The S.N.O.L. (G) proceeded in the *Brittany* to Syracuse, where the water situation was serious. Information was received, that the 78th Division from Sousse would be disembarked at the Acid beaches.

**24th July—D + 14**

Two M.T. ships arrived (0800). All the stevedores from George sector having been sent to Augusta, discharge could not start until 1130. The *Ulster Queen* arrived at How sector (1800).

**26. DISEMBARKATION OF THE 78th DIVISION (ACID AREA)****25th July—D + 15**

(Ref. Plans 4, 5)

The first elements of the 78th Division arrived in 13 L.C.I.s (L) at 0615, followed at 0830 by nine L.S.T. at Acid beaches. Six M.T. ships arrived at 1130. The *Aldenham* brought in four fishing vessels seized off Cape Asparanto, their crews were warned not to venture out again.

**26th July—D + 16**

Two L.S.T.s arrived at 0830 and eight L.C.I.s (L) at 1700. The *Hardingham* was near-missed in the morning air raid at George sector.

**27th July—D + 17**

Four L.S.T.s arrived at 1030. The *Empire Gnome* sailed, towing a pontoon to Augusta and four L.S.T.s were sent to embark beach commandos and prisoners of war for Sousse. At 2315, the *Ocean Wanderer* was slightly damaged by a near miss in an air raid. L.C.M. 541 was also damaged, and had one killed and two wounded.

**28th July—D + 18**

At 0730, eight L.S.T.s and 12 L.C.I.s (L) arrived and empty L.S.T.s and L.S.I.s (L) were sailed with an escort for Malta and Sousse. At 2000, all the Acid shipping was sailed with A/S screen and A/A. escort to an anchorage off Marzameni. This movement, termed operation "Rumble," which was adopted as a nightly precaution to avoid air attacks, proved very successful. The ships returned each morning to the beaches.

**29th July—D + 19**

In a heavy north-easterly swell that made discharging on the beaches difficult, L.C.T.s 375, 416, and three L.C.I.s broached to and the pontoon in George sector was seriously damaged. Three L.C.T.s were sent to Syracuse for discharge. Four L.S.T.s and two L.C.I.s (L) arrived, also L.S.T. 305 fitted with G.C.I. equipment at 0730. Two ships from convoy K.M.S. 19 arrived, also ten more L.S.T.s. As the L.S.T.s were unable to beach, eight were sailed to Syracuse, the remainder anchored; later, six empty L.S.T.s and two L.C.I.s (L) were sailed for Sousse.

<sup>1</sup> See Section 46.

**30th July-3rd August—D + 20 to D + 24**

Three L.S.T.s were sent to discharge at Syracuse, four more arrived and five were sailed for Sousse. Two M.T. ships were sailed for Malta and three arrived.

Three M.T. ships were sailed for Malta, also two L.C.T.s for Tripoli. L.S.T. No. 330 towed a damaged L.C.T. to Syracuse. One L.S.T. sailed for Sousse.

The *Oriana*, tug, towed three L.C.M.s off George beach. Three M.T. ships sailed for Malta.

One water ship arrived and sailed later for Syracuse. The *Salvestor* towed L.C.T. No. 375 to Syracuse.

Three L.C.T.s were sent to Syracuse for discharge, one arrived from Syracuse.

**4th August—D + 25**

Two L.C.I.s (L) arrived from Augusta. One L.C.T. sailed to discharge at Syracuse. Three M.T. ships sailed to join convoy for Malta. Preparations were begun during the day to close the Acid area.

**5th August—D + 26**

George sector closed down at noon. Shipping and landing craft were sent to Augusta and Syracuse and the L.S.T. pontoon was towed to Augusta. At 1315 the S.N.O.L. (G) and staff in the *Brittany* with the beach commando and beach signal party in the *Ulster Queen*, *Aldenham* and L.C.I. (L) 171 sailed for Malta, followed by L.S.T. 305 and the *City of Newcastle*.

**6th August—D + 27**

All shipping and craft remaining in Acid area were sailed for Malta, Augusta and Syracuse. The S.N.O.L. (H) with staff in the *Hurworth* with the How beach commando in L.C.I. (L) 278 left for Malta and Acid area finally closed down.

**Summary of Beach Work**

During the 27 working days: 10th July to 5th August, the following personnel, vehicles and stores were landed from ships and landing craft in the Acid sectors:—

*George Sector*

Ships and craft discharged: 3 L.S.I.s (L), 2 L.S.P.s, 26 M.T. ships, 24 L.S.T.s, 24 L.C.I.s (L) and 11 pre-loaded L.C.T.s.

*Personnel disembarked.*

24,959

*Vehicles.*

4,871

*Stores (tons).*

19,814

*How Sector*

27 M.T. ships and 7 L.S.T.s were discharged, as well as small craft whose numbers are not stated.

*Personnel disembarked.*

Not stated.

*Vehicles.*

4,057

*Stores (tons).*

19,807

*Jig Sector*

No figures are available for this sector which was only in operation for four days.

**27. FORCE "A". REMARKS BY THE N.C.F. "A"**

Rear-Admiral Troubridge (N.C.F. "A") included in his report a number of "Lessons learnt," of which the following is a brief summary of important points:—

- (i) The principal lesson is the immense advantage of having a properly constituted assault force. For combined operations, he advocated the formation of units under an S.N.O.L. Four such units, each consisting of one squadron of major landing craft, one squadron of minor landing craft, a beach commando and a beach signal station, would form an assault force commanded by a flag officer.
- (ii) A suitable type of small ship, such as an L.C.I. (L), should be provided for each S.N.O.L. to which he can transfer on departure of his L.S.I.
- (iii) In each sector landing craft should burn coloured stern lights distinguishing the sector. Major landing craft should have white markings of different designs, i.e., diamonds, squares, etc., indicating their sectors.
- (iv) To enable supporting arms to be landed on the heels of the assaulting infantry, L.C.T.s should carry at least four Dukws pre-loaded with anti-tank and A.A. weapons.
- (v) L.C.T.s should not be so overloaded that vehicles are drowned due to beaching in too deep water.
- (vi) Drivers of vehicles require training and practice in disembarking over ramps and through beach-exits.
- (vii) *Fuel.*—(a) Reserve fuel should not be embarked in L.S.I. or L.S.P. (b) Cased fuel in M.T. ships should have plastic or sandbag protection against bomb splinters. (c) Small tankers should be provided for fuelling escorts and other craft as large ships present attractive targets for air attack.
- (viii) The provision of special salvage and fire fighting tugs is suggested. An L.C.T. fitted with powerful hose equipment and foam, like a Thames fire float, would be invaluable, particularly in captured ports.
- (ix) Smoke screens were extensively used. Weather conditions favoured this form of defence, the smoke rising about 70 ft. obscured shipping and obstructed selective attack by aircraft. The moral effect was good by preventing the "naked" feeling of crews of ships at anchor in bright moonlight. As captured ports will certainly be subjected to heavy scale night attack, adequate supplies of smoke appliances should be landed as soon as possible.
- (x) To provide close support fire during the final approach, all L.C.A.s should be fitted with a pair of Vickers "K" guns in the position normally used for Bren guns.
- (xi) Some form of recognition signal (smoke or pyrotechnic) should be employed by forward troops when advancing along the coast to indicate their positions to supporting ships.
- (xii) Prompt and efficient reorganization of captured ports, which is of vital importance, requires competent experienced N.O.s i/c and staff. They should participate in planning and take passage in the headquarters ship, where they would keep in touch with the situation and receive last minute instructions from the Force commander.

On the subject of naval supporting fire Admiral Troubridge remarks, that the small weight of the enemy's air attacks enabled support to be given on a larger scale and with greater accuracy than would have been possible if ships had had to manoeuvre at high speed for protection against bombing.

Unobserved indirect fire, which had to be used in the early stages, proved more effective than was expected in neutralizing and in some instances, silencing enemy batteries. Doubtless this was partly due to the low morale of the Italians. In the first four days approximately 50 targets were engaged, about half of them without F.O.O. observation. Direct and indirect bombardment of towns and large area targets without F.O.O. observation considerably assisted the army and the early capture of Melilli was due to this form of support.

#### Evacuation of Casualties

During daylight, hospital ships lay 7 miles off the beaches and from 15 to 20 miles at night. Consequently it was not possible to evacuate casualties after 1600. It was recommended that in future, hospital ships should lie about 2 miles off the beaches and their movements should be controlled by the naval commander of the sector. Where sea crossings do not exceed 100 miles, L.C.T.s and L.C.I.s could be used to evacuate casualties to base hospitals. They would have to carry medical officers and sick berth staff. Specially equipped non-operational L.C.T.s would be almost ideal for this purpose.

A naval medical officer should be attached to each S.N.O.L. As hospital ships were not available at night, casualties were sent either to headquarters ships or beach dressing stations. The former are unsuitable for dealing with large numbers and evacuation from the latter to hospital ships entails undue shaking up. A satisfactory solution would be to have a small hospital carrier in the anchorage.

#### Water

M.T. ships should carry water and be provided with a means for discharging it. The assault force should be accompanied by a small water tanker. If mains in captured ports are damaged, water for port personnel should be supplied in drums. The stand-by S.N.O.L. ship, if of suitable size, should be fitted to carry extra water and a provision store for all small craft operating in the assault area.

#### CHAPTER V

##### 28. FORCE "B". OBJECTIVE AND ORGANIZATION

(Ref. Plans 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

The central British assault was directed against the south-eastern corner of Sicily. This area was sub-divided into two sectors, Bark East and Bark South, the naval forces engaged being under the command of Rear-Admiral R. R. McGrigor (Naval Commander, Force "B"). The Bark East force, carrying the 231st Brigade, only came under his orders after it had been detached from the M.W.F. 36 convoy. Its task was to land at beaches in the Nan sector, north of Marzamemi.

The Bark South force, carrying the 51st Highland Division, 30th Corps, was composed mostly of landing craft convoys whose mission was a shore-to-shore assault from ports in North Africa. Its task was to land on beaches in the Peter and Queen sectors, seizing the islands of Passero and Correnti.

These landing places were selected, so as to outflank the Bay of Porto Palo (Amber beach), which was the first objective. Porto Palo Bay was known to be well defended and, after capture the intention was to make it the principal maintenance beach in the Bark South area. The objectives of the assaulting troops were :—

- (1) To capture the town and airfield of Pachino.
- (2) To link up with the 1st Canadian Division, which was landing in the Bark West sector ; then
- (3) To advance inland and capture the towns of Noto, Rosolini, Spaccaforno and Pozzallo, together with the road and railway connecting those places.

#### Organization of Force "B"

The Bark East assault force sailed from Egypt as part of convoy M.W.F. 36, the troops being embarked in three L.S.I.s (L)—Keren, Strathnaver and Otranto, three L.C.I.s (L) were also attached to this group, which was commanded by Captain Lord Ashbourne, R.N., the S.N.O.L. (N). The 231st Brigade, originally from Malta, had carried out its training in Egypt after transfer there.

The Bark South assault force consisted of the following ships and landing craft :—

4 L.S.I.s (M) . . . Royal Ulsterman, Royal Scotsman, Queen Emma and Princess Beatrix, carrying 22 L.C.A.s, 3 L.C.S.s and 2 L.C.M.s.

28 L.S.T.s . . . 28 L.C.T.s, 36 L.C.I.s (L).

Headquarters ship H.M.S. *Largs* (Flag of N.C.F. "B").

The military force embarked consisted of the 51st Highland Division and a commando detachment. The 30th Corps Commander, Lt.-Gen. Sir O. Leese, Bart., and the G.O.C., 51st Division, Major-Gen. D. Wimberley, with their staffs, took passage in the *Largs*.

The assault forces had received combined training at Djidjelli prior to embarkation, but this had been somewhat handicapped by the deflection of craft and personnel for participation in the capture of the island of Pantellaria.

The military personnel and vehicles were moved from Djidjelli to Sousse, Sfax and Malta as follows :—

- (a) Personnel by L.C.I. (L) and L.S.T.
- (b) Wheeled vehicles by road from Djidjelli to Sousse.
- (c) Tracked vehicles by L.S.T. and L.C.T.

This movement entailed a reduction of training time by about a week, but it served as a valuable rehearsal.

The Bark South convoys were loaded and sailed as follows :—

- Convoy S.B.F. 1—L.S.I. (M) from Sfax.
- Convoy S.B.F. 2—L.C.I. (L) from Malta.
- Convoy S.B.S. 1—L.C.T. from Sfax.
- Convoy S.B.M. 1—L.S.T. from Sfax.

The reason for sailing the S.B.F. 2 convoy from Malta was to reduce the time the bulk of the troops would have to live on board the landing craft under cramped conditions. As vehicles could not be loaded at Sfax, all the L.C.T. and L.S.T. were sent first to Sousse to load there before embarking military personnel at Sfax prior to sailing. Loading of vehicles at Sousse had to be effected under difficult conditions as its small harbour was strewn with wrecks and other obstructions.

On 4th July, L.S.T. 429, on passage from Sousse to Sfax laden with M.T., was lost by fire. She had a pontoon bridge in tow, which was recovered next day by H.M.S. *Tango*. No lives were lost; the vehicles were replaced and loaded into a spare L.S.T.

Convoy S.B.S. 1, which was led by L.S.T. 69, included 29 L.C.T.s, 5 L.C.G.s, 6 L.C.R.s and the 4 H.D.M.L.s detailed to lead in the assault craft, sailed from Sfax at 1400, D — 3. The escort consisted of 2 destroyers, 4 minesweepers, 3 trawlers and 2 M.L.s. Convoy S.B.F. 1, consisting of the *Largs* (headquarters ship) and the 4 L.S.I.s (M), sailed from Sfax at 2130, D — 2. The escort of 4 *Hunt* class destroyers and the A.A. ship *Ulster Queen*, joined during the passage.

Convoy S.B.F. 2, consisting of 23 L.C.I.s with assaulting troops, sailed from Malta at 1500, D — 1, escorted by 2 destroyers and 14 M.L.s. Convoy S.B.M. 1, consisting of 26 L.S.T.s, escorted by 2 destroyers, 8 trawlers and 8 M.L.s, sailed at 1730, D — 2 from Sfax.

The times of sailing of the convoys were arranged to enable them to reach the release position at H — 2½ hours.

## 29. PLANS FOR CLOSE SUPPORT AND BOMBARDING

The close-support craft of the Bark South assaults were organized in three groups as follows :—

- (1) Red assault group.—Two destroyers, three L.C.G.s, one L.C.F., two L.C.S.s.
- (2) Amber demonstration group.—One destroyer, one L.C.S.
- (3) Green assault group.—One destroyer, two L.C.G.s, one L.C.F., one L.C.S.

Bombardment and close support was divided into three phases :—

- (i) Before H-hour ;
- (ii) From H-hour to 15 minutes before first light ;
- (iii) After H + 105 minutes.

The priority of targets was defined as :—

First.—Opportunity targets, searchlights or guns firing.

Second.—Known enemy positions and other pre-arranged targets.

The approximate positions only of the close support craft in Phase I were indicated, the larger craft being ordered not to close within two miles of the beaches until surprise had been lost. Smoke might be laid to screen the assaulting craft, provided that it did not cause them to lose sight of their leader. After the troops were ashore in Phase II, the supporting ships and craft could fire as necessary into the 51st Division's area outside the lines of restriction. Inside these lines they were only to fire to put out searchlights, or by F.O.O.'s call, or by order of N.C.F. "B".

In Phase III, while the assaulting troops were occupied in clearing the 51st Division area, Amber demonstration group supported by the *Eggesford* would engage pill-box targets. An L.C.S. making smoke would enter Porto Palo Bay, the intention being to make the enemy believe that the main attack would be there. At H + 145 minutes the group would withdraw and join the Red or Green support groups as ordered.

## Bombarding Squadron Orders

The bombarding squadron (Group II of Force "K") was organized into two sub-groups :—

Group IIa.—*Orion*, *Loyal*.

Group IIb.—*Newfoundland* (C.S. 15), *Laforey*, *Lookout*.

On release by the Rear-Admiral, Force "V", in position C.F. at H — 2 hours, the bombarding squadron would proceed to its bombarding position about five miles south of Correnti Island, arriving by H — 15 minutes. Fire was only to be opened at first priority targets if surprise was lost. This instruction would hold also for *inside* the unrestricted areas during Phase II, but searchlights holding our craft might be engaged. Fire was not to be opened inside the 51st Division area between H + 105 minutes and H + 120 minutes.

During Phase III, the whole daylight period of D-day, firing was to be restricted to :—

- (a) Calls from attacked F.O.O.s.
- (b) Special targets ordered by the Rear-Admiral, Force "B".
- (c) Counter-battery fire; observing that this might endanger the troops ashore.

## 30. SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY OPERATIONS

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 6)

Naval support would be given to the following military operations :—

*Nap One*.—The advance from the Red beaches towards Punta Anipro and the marshland on the east side of Porto Palo Bay, the object of which was to clear the Amber beaches by a flank assault. The Red supporting group and the bombarding squadron would operate to the south-westward and the Green supporting group to the eastward of their respective target areas. The L.C.F. and L.C.S. were to work up the coast from Correnti Island giving additional support, smoke being laid if called for. When fire was lifted to the second target area a similar procedure was to be followed with the Green support group participating.

## THE INVASION OF SICILY

*Nap Two.*—An advance on Porto Palo Bay (east side) being a continuation of the attack. If resistance had been strong, time might be required to reform. The positions of the groups would be the same as for Nap One.

*Kilchurn.*—This operation was an advance from the Red beaches to the westward, to clear the coast as far as the boundary of the 1st Canadian Division.

The Red support group (less L.C.F. and L.C.S.) with any available ships of the bombarding squadron would support from south-westward of Correnti Island. The L.C.F. and L.C.S. would work up the coast from Correnti Island, firing at machine guns and providing smoke at call.

*Tel-el-Kebir.*—This operation was the landing on the Amber beaches; either on Amber I (east end of Porto Palo Bay) or on Amber II (between Porto Palo Bay and Passero Island). The same target areas were indicated for either case. If the Red support L.C.G. had already registered on their area they would remain at anchor westward of Correnti Island, otherwise all available supporting ships and craft would take up bombarding positions to the southward and south-eastward of the Amber beaches.

Other operations were:—

*St. Andrews.*—An advance towards the ridge of high ground one mile north of Porto Palo Bay.

*Khartoum.*—An advance towards Pachino town from the high ridge. These movements would be supported by any available ships of the bombarding squadron and the L.C.G., according to circumstances.

## 31. THE APPROACH BARK SOUTH AND BARK EAST FORCES

(Ref. Plans 3, 4, 5, 6)

9th July—D — 1

At 1700, as the *Largs* entered the Malta swept channel, the S.B.F. 2 convoy was sighted; it took station astern. Weather conditions were difficult, and it became necessary to reduce speed and adjust the course to prevent the L.C.I.s being left behind. At 1857, the S.B.S. 1 convoy (L.C.T.) was sighted, making about 3½ knots. The two convoys combined and course was altered to the northward to shorten the distance to the release position. Gradually ground was lost and the final stages of the approach resembled a general chase, the L.C.T.s eventually arriving at the release position some two hours late.

When the H.D.M.L.s were detached to join the *Largs*, they had to proceed at their utmost speed and were almost swamped, but, in spite of flooding, damage and discomfort, they kept up and later successfully performed their duty of leading in the assault craft.

Information had been received before sailing of the loss by capsizing of L.C.T. 547 which was carrying six Sherman tanks. She had been strained on passage from the United Kingdom. Several of the L.C.T.s broke down and had to be taken in tow by the L.C.G.s and L.C.F.s, but in spite of difficulties eventually disembarked their loads on the correct beaches.

The wind and sea after passing Malta having increased considerably without signs of improvement, at 1900 the N.C.F. "B" conferred with the senior military officers. It was decided to proceed two miles further north before anchoring in order to obtain a lee and reduce the distance that the L.C.A.s would have to make under their own power. This alteration of plan proved unnecessary as the weather improved markedly after 2100.

## THE EASTERN TASK FORCE

On approaching the 100-fathom line the minesweepers took station ahead, but were overtaken by the convoy before they finished streaming their sweeps. The N.C.F. "B" decided not to reduce speed again and, in view of the favourable report on enemy mines, to accept any risk and hold on. Several alterations of course, later enabled the minesweepers to draw clear ahead.

Land was sighted when about seven miles from the release position. As the *Largs* was about two or three miles to windward of her correct position course was altered 20° to starboard. Shortly afterwards the marking submarine (*Unison*) was sighted. Deciding that on account of the weather it would be advantageous to remain to windward, the N.C.F. "B" anchored the convoy one mile to the westward and windward of the release position, only 15 minutes late.

On the run from the Malta swept channel the *Princess Beatrix* had streamed her taut wire measuring gear, which, with the *Largs*' 273 Radar was invaluable in aiding the accurate navigation of the convoy.

During the approach a large number of troop-carrying aircraft passed over the convoys, obviously some distance from their proper course. Later on survivors from gliders which had landed in the sea were picked up by units of the Bark South force.

In the direction of Syracuse searchlights and A.A. fire were visible; one beam near Pachino swept the sea around Cape Passero for some time and it was feared that it might pick up the larger landing craft as they made for the Green beaches north of the point. However, this searchlight was switched off after serving to enable the assaulting craft to get their bearings on the silhouetted island. Thus far the approach of the Bark South was undetected and the possibility of complete surprise could be reckoned on with confidence.

## Bark East Force

Meanwhile the Bark East force which had been detached from convoy M.W.F. 36 at 2335, D - 1, was approaching its release position. As the *Keren's* radar was out of order, the destroyer *Pindos* (G) was stationed on her bow to detect the marking submarine (*Unseen*). On obtaining bearings of the land and Cozzo Spadaro lighthouse, it was found that Bark East force had parted from convoy M.W.F. 36, about three miles short of the correct position so course was adjusted accordingly. The southerly set having proved to be stronger than expected, the marking submarine when passed at 0021/10, was estimated to be slightly to the south-east of the release position. Bark East force stopped in the release position at 0030; though the wind had moderated, there was still a confused swell running from the northward.

## 32. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS—BARK EAST SECTOR

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A)

10th July—D-day

After lowering, the L.C.A.s formed up in readiness, while H.D.M.L. 1257 was sent on ahead to locate the correct beaches and show a guiding light for the assault flights. This precaution was fully justified as the Folbot from the *Unseen* was missing.

Weather conditions made the lowering and forming up of the L.C.A. flotilla very difficult and some craft had to be left to follow on. The main body of the assaulting L.C.A.s made a successful though somewhat ragged run in and surprise was not lost until within 50 yards of the beaches. All the flights touched down at the correct time. Only light machine-gun fire and sniping was encountered on beaching, to which the L.C.S. and L.C.F. 17 replied effectively. There were no naval casualties, those of the military were light.

The sea inshore being calm, scramble landings were made without difficulty; the reserve company landed on scramble Red beach. As an attempt to land K.3 commando on Red beach met with considerable opposition, the landing was made at Amber beach. A 75 mm. field gun, concealed in a shed 50 yards inland of scramble Amber beach, was captured intact with its ammunition, after the assaulting troops had dealt with its sleeping crew.

When the M.M.S commenced sweeping from the release position at 0530, it was found that the L.S.I. (L) had drifted  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the southward. Fleet M/S, which arrived at 0600, carried out a clearing sweep and marked a channel, no mines were found.

A coast defence battery, situated about 2,000 yards north of Pachino, opened fire from five guns in an attempt to lay a defensive barrage on a line 200 yards off the beaches. No serious damage was done to the landing craft. At 0533, H.N.M.S.s *Flores* and *Soemba* engaged this battery, under F.O.O. direction and neutralized it by 0645, their shooting was commented on as "excellent."

At 0615, the Bark East portion of convoy M.W.S. 36 with L.S.T. 411 and escort arrived. The enemy's fire by 0640 being only spasmodic, all ships were ordered in to the anchorage, the *Keren* leading. L.S.T. 411 was sent on and immediately landed her tanks at Red beach. The L.C.T.s delayed by weather, did not arrive until 0648, nearly six hours late. After the M.T. ships had reached the anchorage at 0740, the ferry service of discharging proceeded quickly. Neither of the Bark East beaches were found to have been mined, but the area inland of Red beach was heavily mined.

During the forenoon the N.C.E.T F. (Admiral Ramsay) in the *Antwerp* visited the Bark East sector. Only one air attack was made during the morning, by two M.E. 109s which fired cannon on Red beach at 0550, wounding one rating. The only landing craft lost at Bark East was L.C.P. (R) 913, which was set on fire by a shell splinter during the assault and burnt out without loss of life.

At 1025, L.S.T. 97 arrived from Bark South and landed vehicles for the 51st Division. The S.N.O.L. (N) (Captain Lord Ashbourne) transferred to the *Alynbank* at 1230 and issued orders concerning the establishment of A S patrols, and use of smoke cover at dusk and dawn.

At 1400, the *Keren*, *Strathnaver* and *Otranto* escorted by the *Shoreham* sailed to join convoy at Bark South. After their departure the M.T. ships were moved closer inshore.

The loss of the M.T. ship *Shahjehan* was seriously felt now, not only because of the vehicles and stores lost, but also because her two L.C.M.s and four docks operation companies were not available for unloading. Throughout the following days the lack of stevedores delayed the rate of discharge. On the beaches, however, with the help of prisoners, labour was adequate and its capacity greater than could be exploited.



Between 2010 and midnight intermittent air attacks were made on the shipping, but the only damage was that caused by a near miss on the *Alynbank* which killed two ratings.

When the *Gawler*, *Ipswich*, *Lismore* and *Maryborough* were returning to Malta from Bark East at 2310/10, the *Gawler* carried out a "snap" attack on a contact dropping four depth charges. Five explosions were heard but a further search yielded no result.

#### **11th July—D + 1**

The S.N.O.L. (N) agreed with the N.C.F. "B" to sending L.C.T.s from Bark South to unload at Bark East. When five arrived at noon it was soon found that their discharge seriously affected that of the M.T. ships. A further source of delay was the grounding on Isola Grande of L.S.T. 9, which had arrived with vehicles for the 51st Division.

The hospital ship *Dorsetshire* which arrived during the afternoon, was ordered to seaward in the evening so as to avoid air attack. Although fully illuminated, she was deliberately bombed and suffered damage and a number of casualties.

#### **12th July—D + 2**

The N.C.F. "B" directed that the Bark East beaches were to be kept open mainly for L.C.T.s carrying 51st Division stores after the M.T. ships there were cleared. The only M.T. ship due to arrive on D + 3 would be transferred to Bark South. This arrangement permitted greater economy in A/S patrols.

At night the hospital ships *Amra* and *Dorsetshire*, with lights extinguished, were anchored close to the other shipping under A.A. and smoke protection. Two M.T. ships at Bark East completed unloading late in the evening.

#### **13th July—D + 3**

On the departure of the N.C.F. "B" (Rear-Admiral McGrigor) for Syracuse, all the Bark areas came under the orders of the N.C.F. "V" (Rear-Admiral Vian) who held a conference of S.N.O.L.s on board the *Hilary*. Two empty M.T. ships were sailed to rendezvous with the Tripoli convoy and the *Alynbank* was withdrawn from Bark East to increase the A.A. protection at Bark South. Three partly discharged M.T. ships and the S.S. *Diomede* from the follow-up convoy were ordered from Bark West to discharge at Bark East, as the N.C.F. "V" had decided to close down Bark West. Two Hunt class destroyers were sent to reinforce the A.A. protection at Bark East and a combined A/S patrol was organized for the Bark South and East sectors. The S.N.O.L. (N) transferred his headquarters ashore to a house at Isola Piccolo which gave a convenient view over the anchorage. By evening three more M.T. ships had completed discharge.

#### **14th July—D + 4**

During the forenoon 913 prisoners of war were embarked in two M.T. ships which, with an empty M.T. ship, were sailed at 1400 to join convoy. The transfer of M.T. ships to Bark East was discussed in conference with the N.C.F. "V." Three M.T. ships from Bark West with the hospital ships *Dinard* and *St. Julian* arrived in the evening while an air attack was in progress. One M.T. ship (*Fort Meaducic*) reported having sighted a circling torpedo, but thanks to effective smoke cover no ships were hit or damaged. From three enemy aircraft seen to crash, only one survivor was picked up.

15th July—D + 5

The Netherlands gunboats *Soemba* and *Flores* sailed for Augusta during the afternoon. The *Fort Nashwaak* embarked 734 prisoners of war in the afternoon and sailed, with two other empty M.T. ships, at 1800, to join the Tripoli convoy. The hospital ship *Dinard* sailed at 1900. Two M.T. ships, which had discharged vehicles only at Bark South, arrived to discharge stores.

16th July—D + 6

Unloading proceeded favourably during the day. The approaches to the anchorage were swept by four fleet M/S which had arrived from Tripoli. In the evening they sailed to rendezvous with and escort empty M.T. ships from Acid area to Tripoli. Some more L.C.T.s with 51st Division stores arrived from Bark South.

17th July—D + 7

The S.N.O.L. (N) visited AMGOT<sup>1</sup> at Pachino and requested the cancellation of unauthorized permission for tunny fishing; other matters were discussed with the Brick commander. The hospital ship *St. Julian* sailed for Sousse. One L.S.T. arrived and beached on Red beach.

Commander R. W. Thompson, R.N., relieved Captain Lord Ashbourne as S.N.O.L. (N), the responsibility for ships at Bark East anchorage being assumed by Captain C. R. L. Parry (D.21). On completion of discharge of the remaining M.T. ships the Bark East beaches were to be closed down.

18th July—D + 8

Captain Lord Ashbourne and staff sailed for Malta in the *Brecon* at 0700. Certain points from his report on the operations at Bark East are summarized as follows :—

- (1) Smoke cover at dawn, dusk and night, proved to be an effective protection against air attack. It was advantageous to haul down balloons below the smoke and to withhold fire until the attack developed. Close co-operation with the army smoke organization was of great value in protecting the anchorage.
- (2) First flight assault craft should make an immediate brief signal reporting the results of their landing.
- (3) Arrangements should be made to provide replenishments of food for M.L.s, M.M/S., etc.
- (4) Though landing craft required little attention, the beach repair party proved useful in dealing with small defects. The Le Tourneau crane was useful in hoisting heavy stores into lorries, it should not be landed before D + 1.
- (5) Though L.C.P.s (S) are too vulnerable for landing initial assault troops and are unable in bad weather to keep up with the L.C.A.s, five were used to carry an extra company of the reserve battalion.

Technical details on the working of communications, which, despite the prodigious number of signals, was excellent, were given in an Appendix.

<sup>1</sup> Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories.

### 33. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS. BARK SOUTH AREA

(Ref. Plans 4, 5, 5A, 6)

10th July—D-Day

On reaching the release position at 0034, the L.C.A.s fully manned, were lowered in six minutes, and proceeded to form up in their groups on their H.D.M.L.s. One group (Green) drifted out of sight, but eventually joined the main body just before beaching. The signal for the assault formations to proceed was made at 0115. Due to the heavy swell running, the work of lowering the L.C.M.s and embarking troops in the L.C.I.s (L) proved difficult. Only 5 out of 12 L.C.I.s (L) were able to obey the signal, 2 were still loading, the others, delayed by the weather, were sent in to their beaches independently.

H.D.M.L. 1221 arrived at the waiting position 15 minutes late. At Red I beach the L.C.A.s touched down to time; at Red II beach, L.C.A. 254 received 5 mortar hits, and had 11 casualties, but the remainder landed their troops without casualties. The left flank of the landing was covered by L.C.S. 34.

Disembarkation was slow as the swell unshipped the ramps. The L.C.T.s beached on a 50-yards stretch of sand, which was reduced by an L.S.T. ramming an L.C.I. (L) and pushing her up on the beach. At Red II beach the touch-down was made a few minutes before H-hour, some 200–300 yards to the westward of the correct beach. Here a platoon moving north ran into mines and suffered some casualties. As the assaulting L.C.A.s had had to struggle against a head sea and heavy swell with seas breaking over them their performance was most praiseworthy.

The fact that the Red beaches were not good appears to have been fully appreciated by the enemy, for, with the exception of Red II, they were found to be only lightly defended. The commando detachment landed on Correnti Island, cleared it of enemy troops without incident. The first five L.C.I.s beached on time, the remainder landed their troops between 0400 and 0430.

The S.B.S. 1 convoy (L.C.T.s) arrived about two hours late and went straight in to their beaches. The first L.C.T. beached about 0400, and the majority of the remainder before dawn, thus enabling tanks and anti-tank guns to be landed before a counter-attack could be expected.

Included in Force "B" were six L.C.T.s (R). It had been planned to use them in support of the assaults on Red II, III, and Green II beaches, on the flanks at Amber beach and on the west flank of Red II beach, a position which might form a threat to the Canadian landing. In the event, however, these rocket craft arrived too late to support the assaults, so they were sent in and fired on flank targets between 0308 and 0420. The moral effect of their fire was so impressive that some 70 of the enemy surrendered at a strong point on the western side of the landing.

At 0735, when the *Eggesford* reported no apparent activity at Amber beach, two L.C.A.s, sent in to reconnoitre from the *Royal Ulsterman*, found the beach clear. The only opposition encountered by a beach party which landed on Amber beach at 0900, was a burst of machine gun fire. A full broadside from a *Hunt* class destroyer stifled any repetition of this resistance.

Although there was considerable congestion on the beaches, especially after the reserve brigade had landed at first light, all the L.C.I.s and L.C.T.s of the 154th and 153rd Brigades were discharged by 0745.

At 0900, the L.S.I.s (M) were moved to the anchorage off Amber beach. On shore some mines, marked by cairns of stones, were found in the exits, but the beaches were clear. The defences appeared to have been abandoned after the rocket craft had engaged their positions.

After the beach had been surveyed, the L.S.T.s were ordered by signal to come on in as soon as possible. L.S.T. 69, which had already discharged her tanks and self-propelled guns at Red beach, was sent on to discharge her other vehicles on Amber beach. The Amber beach naval and military personnel, arrived in convoys S.B.M. 1 and S.B.F. 3 at about 1500. At Amber beach an L.S.T. pontoon causeway was used but discharge proved to be slow, subsequently it proved most useful for landing personnel from the L.C.I.s (L) and as a pier for dispatch boats, casualty clearing, etc. It was soon found that a false beach caused difficulty, and Dukws had to be used for landing stores from the L.S.T.s. This false beach ran the whole length of Amber beach and it was only possible to discharge L.S.T.s at the pontoon. A long rocky ledge on the eastern promontory of the bay, after the R.E. had filled the hollows with rocks and sandbags, was opened as Amber II beach. Its surface was drilled and levelled to make a good hard with excellent exits. Prisoners of war were employed to assist in this work and by D + 2, five L.S.T.s could be discharged at the same time as fast as the vehicles could drive out.

During the afternoon, convoy S.B.F. 2, consisting of L.C.I.s (L) arrived and landed over 4,000 troops almost simultaneously. Meanwhile the L.S.T.s continued beaching; of those using the sandy shores, only a minority succeeded in landing all their vehicles without casualties, the others had a number drowned from various causes.

At 1400, the three L.S.I.s (M) sailed for Sousse. The N.C.F. "B" in the *Largs*, after visiting Bark East and Bark West, returned to Bark South for the night. The first L.S.T. convoy was sailed for Malta at 2100.

By dark the 51st Division with a large proportion of its vehicles was well established on shore and the G.O.C. 51st Division had set up his headquarters.

There was some air activity during the night but no bombs were dropped at Bark South. One enemy aircraft was shot down by the *Eggesford*. The hospital ship *Dorsetshire* with all lights extinguished anchored in the bay.

#### 11th July—D + 1

Unloading the L.S.T.s continued throughout the day, by nightfall all the first flight were discharged and over 20 had been sailed for Malta.

The S.N.O.L. (Q) landed and installed his staff in a building close to Amber II beach, releasing the *Royal Ulsterman* which sailed for Malta at 2045.

The G.O.C. 30th Corps established his headquarters on shore at 1500. It was decided to close the Bark West beaches as soon as possible on account of the difficulties of landing on a lee shore and to send all M.T. ships from there to discharge at Bark South.

The landing at Bark South, due to its position between the Bark East and Bark West landings, was singularly free from air attack. It had the advantage too of being a "shore-to-shore" landing in which ships and craft were not retained for long periods off the beaches, but could beach and clear directly on arrival. Smoke cover was used successfully at night and unseen targets were not fired on, with the result that no attacks were made.

Some L.C.T.s loaded with stores for the 51st Division were sent to discharge at Bark East.

#### 12th July—D + 2

Two M.T. ships from Bark West arrived at 2115 and began discharging with the aid of Dukws. All the first flights of L.S.T.s and L.C.T.s as well as a number of the first follow-up craft completed unloading during the afternoon.

#### 13th July—D + 3

Convoy K.M.S. 19 (A) arrived at 0645 and started discharging. The N.C.F. "V" (Rear-Admiral Vian) assumed command of Bark South and East sectors and the S.N.O.L. (S) (Captain I. R. H. Black) took charge of Amber beach as all his ships were now arriving in the bay. The N.C.F. "B" (Rear Admiral McGrigor) in the *Largs* proceeded to Syracuse for duty as Flag Officer Sicily (F.O. Sy.).

#### 14th July—D + 4

The unloading of M.T. ships was accelerated by sending L.S.T.s alongside them to receive vehicles on their upper and tank decks for discharge at Amber II beach. Empty craft were sailed in groups as convenient to Malta.

#### 15th July—D + 5

The S.N.O.L. (Q) (Captain N. V. Dickinson), his staff and beach party sailed for Sousse during the forenoon leaving the Assistant S.N.O.L. (Q) (Comr. C. G. Vyner) with one beach group at Amber II beach to assist the S.N.O.L. (S). Prisoners of war not required for working parties were sent to Sousse in returning L.S.T.s.

The only naval casualties at Bark South were four in L.S.T. 417, from a near miss by bomb or A.A. shell early on D + 3. Though air raids were seen most evenings to the north-eastward, only two bombs were dropped off Porto Palo Point. Losses of landing craft were slight; three L.C.T.s, one L.C.I. (L) and one L.C.A. stranded at Red II beach were all got off by D + 5 with the exception of L.C.I. (L) 124.

Two L.C.A.s were left for the S.N.O.L.s use and for evacuation of wounded by the *Royal Ulsterman*. The S.N.O.L. (Q) considered that it is better for an S.N.O.L. to be afloat, as he then has an adequate signal installation and can see what is going on. He intended, if the *Royal Ulsterman* had been damaged, to embark in an L.C.I. (L) which had been fitted as an headquarters ship for the Assault Brigadier.

#### 34. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The following is a brief summary of the conclusions in the report of Rear Admiral McGrigor (N.C.F. "B") :

(1) The L.S.T.s were easy to beach, but they should be fitted with longer ramps; on steep shoal sand or shingle beaches they should beach at high speed. Although they are not assault craft they could be beached in the dark on properly reconnoitred beaches after suitable leading marks had been erected. Bad driving was responsible for drowning many vehicles.

(2) The L.S.T. pontoon proved satisfactory, but towing is hazardous in bad weather. It is suggested that each ship should carry a shorter length of pontoon at specially fitted spur davits on either side.

(3) The L.C.I.s (L) proved suitable for carrying troops considerable distances without adversely affecting their fighting efficiency.

Provided that the water's edge has been clearly marked by an advance party, L.C.I.s (L) could make satisfactory landings on dark nights before the beaches are captured. The essential conditions are :—

(a) Good disembarkation drill.

(b) A beach slope of not more than 1 in 60.

(4) *L.C.T.*—Mark III L.C.T., even when lightly loaded are unsuitable for assault landings in the dark, unless there is no doubt of the landing being dry-shod. The Mark IV craft with reduced load can follow L.C.A. anywhere; they are easily managed and their Oerlikon guns can effectively beat down resistance. They cannot maintain more than 5½ knots in convoy in good weather and loss of speed in bad weather makes their inclusion in timed convoys impossible.

(5) *L.C.A.*—These craft proved their excellence and have a high degree of serviceability when well handled and maintained.

(6) *L.C.G.*—Very little use was made of the L.C.G.s but their value for direct support is undoubted and there should be sufficient to cover every section of a landing.

(7) *L.C.T. (R)*.—The brief demonstration made by these craft at Amber beach heartened the troops and demoralized the defenders. They could be used for controlling and directing L.C.As. by H.F. R/T if they were fitted with a special chart room, taut wire measuring gear and echo sounding.

(8) During training, the 51st Division was anxious to be landed on rocky foreshore for the following reasons:—

- (a) Rocks cannot be mined.
- (b) Rocky cliffs give good cover from fixed line machine guns.
- (c) Rocky places are not usually well defended.

From the naval point of view the great advantage is that the water is generally deep, dry-shod landings possible and withdrawal quicker after beaching. The disadvantage is that of striking on outlying rocks. Assaulting L.C.A.s should be well spaced when beaching on rocky shores.

(9) *Beach Parties*.—Beachmasters and assistant beachmasters should be officers of personality, experience and adequate seniority, capable of exercising complete control in the dark.

For an opposed landing the present strength of the beach parties is insufficient. Where the shores are rocky or difficult leading marks are needed for the L.C.I. and L.C.T. beaching, one beachmaster and two assistant beachmasters cannot reconnoitre adjacent beaches speedily enough to enable advantage to be taken of the brief hours of darkness.

(10) *Beach Lights and Equipment*.—The present types were not altogether satisfactory and are liable to be confused with shore lights such as army mine-gap and guiding lights. Large beach signs with coloured reflectors illuminated by lamps would be more suitable to indicate beaching places for major landing craft.

(11) *Unloading of Stores*.—Although personnel and vehicles can be landed at a high rate, stores proved to be a great difficulty. Valuable ships have to be retained off exposed beaches for days because of the slow rate of unloading.

Some L.S.T.s were unloaded by Dukws, which had difficulty in climbing up the steep ramp. They cannot turn round inside the L.S.T.s and it was very difficult to lift the stores into them. L.S.T.s on the pontoon were no better off because no 3-ton lorries were available and Dukws. can only be driven backwards down the causeway at a very low speed. Roller runways should be carried by L.S.T.s, also additional lengths with the pontoon sections. Considerable improvement is needed in the stowing and unloading of stores, which is the most important part of maintenance over the beaches, if the build up is not to be delayed.

(12) *Unloading Personnel Ships*.—Arrangements should be made for army details to handle baggage.

(13) *Intelligence*.—Photographs of beaches were good but it is essential that each should have some form of scale.

(14) *Navigational*.—H.D.M.L.s need all round hydrophones for use in picking up sonic buoys.

(15) *Taut Wire Measuring Gear*.—This should be fitted in headquarter ships and in the H.D.M.L.s leading in from the release position to the waiting position.

(16) *Marking of Craft*.—Craft should be marked with distinguishing white shapes denoting their groups or beaches.

(17) *Smoke*.—At anchorages, the use of smoke coupled with good fire discipline proved an excellent defence against night bombing.

(18) *"Y" Service*.—The operational value of a good "Y" service to augment Radar plots was proved again during operation "Husky".

### 35. REMARKS ON BOMBARDMENTS. BARK SOUTH

(Ref. Plan, 4, 5)

In addition to the Bombarding Squadron<sup>1</sup> four Hunt class destroyers (*Whaddon*, *Wheatland*, *Lamerton* and *Eggesford*), five L.C.G.s and six L.C.T.s (R) were available for close support.

Before daylight on D-day three L.C.T. (R) fired pre-arranged shots on enemy strong points. After daylight it was apparent that there was no serious opposition and the only close support given was a few rounds fired by the *Whaddon*, *Eggesford* and three L.C.G. The *Laforey* also joined in to silence machine guns firing in Porto Palo Bay.

Later, the Bombarding Squadron at the request of the 30th Corps, fired direct shots on target areas about five miles inland without observation by F.O.O. These targets included the towns of Rosolini and Spaccaforno and areas suspected to contain enemy concentrations. Five F.O.O. parties were landed, four being attached to the Hunt class destroyers with the fifth in reserve. During the period D + 1 to D + 3, the only bombardment carried out was by the *Orion* on the town of Modica on D + 1.

#### Equipment of F.O.O. Parties

As far as possible the F.O.O.s kept up with the army advance but they were greatly handicapped by lack of transport. F.O.O. parties landing with the assault should be equipped with a No. 18 M(c) set and be provided with a white scout car fitted with a No. 19 set complete with driver.

#### Support craft organization

It is suggested that L.C.F., L.C.G. and L.C.T. (R) should cease to be under the Major craft organization and should be known as support gunboats, with appropriate markings, organized in flotillas.

<sup>1</sup> See Section 29.

**Close Support Wave**

The institution of a Close Support Wave is recommended, so that F.O.O.s could call up and make use of fire from L.C.F. and L.C.G. at short range during the assault. It would only be required during the assault, and would leave the B.C.W. as laid down. The use of Crystals on the B.C.W. proved valuable, if possible F.O.O.s should be supplied with them for their spotting waves.

**Planning the use of Rocket Craft**

If rockets are to be fired over the assaulting troops, the assaulting craft formations must be planned to fit in with the requirements of the L.C.T. (R). The L.C.A.s should be about 15° on the bow.

**Use of L.C.G.s**

These craft were designed for direct fire, the army would not agree to them being used for indirect fire.

**Lines of Restriction**

Army lines of restriction for a landing on a 2,000-yard front, gave a safety margin of 2,000 yards on either flank and a depth of several miles into which no firing could take place after H-hour without F.O.O. observation. In order not unduly to restrict naval gunfire support, it may be desirable to have several lines of restriction which could be altered by agreement.

**Code Words**

In combined operations code words are unnecessary. Lettered positions followed by a three-figure bearing and a three-figure distance (in hundreds of yards) would suffice for passing the positions of our own troops. Lettered positions should not be numerous and should include areas in the direction of the probable line of advance.

**Enemy Battery Numbers**

Enemy batteries should be numbered by one central authority for all three services. Defence over-prints should use the I.S.I.s report battery numbers if possible, supplemented as new batteries appear.

**CHAPTER VI****36. FORCE "V" ORGANIZATION, ORDERS, ETC.**

(Ref. Plans 2, 3, 4, 5, 8)

The most westerly area of the Eastern Task Force was Bark West, where the assault was made on Beach No. 57, between Punta della Formiche and Punta Ciriga. Here the stretch of coast was sub-divided into two sectors, Roger and Sugar, in each of which four beaches were indicated as possible landing places. The task of the naval force under the command of Rear-Admiral Vian (Naval Commander Force "V") was to make a ship-to-shore assault in this Bark West area. Force "V" was organized in the United Kingdom and embarked in two convoys: K.M.F. 18, consisting of 12 personnel ships; and K.M.S. 18 of 18 M.T. ships.

The intentions were:—

- (1) To carry the Bark West assault forces to beaches in the vicinity of Punta Chiappa (Lat. 36° 41½' N., Long. 15° 02½' E.).
- (2) To support and protect the assault force during disembarkation.
- (3) To support and maintain the assault force landing.

The boundary between Bark South and Bark West was a line drawn 200° from Punta della Formiche.

**Organization Military Force—Commands, etc.**

The assault would be carried out by the 1st Canadian Division (Force "V") and two Royal Marine Commandos.

This force was commanded by Major-General G. G. Simmonds, C.B.E. (*Hilary*). It consisted of:—

First Canadian Brigade—Brigadier H. D. Graham, E.D. (*Glengyle*) (embarked in the *Glengyle*, *Derbyshire*, *Marnix van St. Aldegonde*).

Second Canadian Brigade—Brigadier C. Vokes (*Circassia*) (embarked in the *Circassia*, *Llangibby Castle*, *Durban Castle*).

Third Canadian Brigade—Brigadier M. H. S. Penhale (*Batory*) (embarked in the *Batory*, *Ascania*).

The commandos were commanded by Brigadier R. E. Laycock (*Derbyshire*):—

No. 40 R.M. Commando—Lt.-Col. J. C. Manners, R.M. (embarked in *Derbyshire*).

No. 41 R.M. Commando—Lt.-Col. B. J. D. Lumsden, R.M. (embarked in *Durban Castle*).

Force "V" came under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, after passing 10° W. longitude and under that of the Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force, when it passed into his area.

**Air Co-operation**

During the passage from the United Kingdom, long-range A/S protection was provided by coastal command aircraft operating from the United Kingdom as far as the latitude of Lisbon. South of that latitude and during passage through the Mediterranean, protection was by long-range aircraft of the R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. operating from North Africa.

Fighter protection was given to the convoys:—

- (a) By aircraft of the N.W.A.C.A.F., while off the Algerian and Tunisian coasts.
- (b) Between Tripoli and Malta by aircraft based on Tripolitania, and by fighters based on Malta.
- (c) In the vicinity of and northward of Malta by aircraft based on Malta and Tripoli.

#### Objectives of Force "V"

The selected beaches on which landings were made by Force "V" were known to be unfavourable, owing to the existence of runnels or shallow bars. The troops were to land on three out of the four beaches in each of the sectors Roger and Sugar; the 1st Canadian Brigade on the Roger beaches, the 2nd Canadian Brigade on the Sugar beaches to the west of Punta Chiappa, and the 40th and 41st R.M. Commandos to the west of Punta Castelluzzo. The objectives of these assault forces were:—

- (a) Capture of the beaches.
- (b) Protect the left flank of the 30th Corps.
- (c) Capture of Pachino airfield.
- (d) Advance to the line of the road, Rosolini—Spaccaforno—Pozzallo in conformity with the 51st Division.

(See Section 28.)

#### Military Landing Plan

(Ref. Plans 8, 11, 12, 13)

The R.M. Commandos, Nos. 40 and 41, would be landed in 22 L.C.A.s led by M.L. No. 1 and supported by a destroyer, one L.C.G. (L) and one L.C.F.

Commando No. 41 in 10 L.C.A.s would beach as soon as practicable after the convoy had anchored.

Commando No. 40, in 12 L.C.A.s, would beach 10 minutes later. After the commandos had landed, 2 L.C.A.s, carrying a special reconnaissance party, would remain to reconnoitre Sugar Red beach and report the result.

#### Roger Assault

(A) The 1st Canadian Brigade would be landed in two flights in Roger sector. The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment on Amber beach, and the Royal Canadian Rifles on Green II beach.

(B) Four companies in 16 L.C.A.s, led by M.L. No. 4, supported by a destroyer (A), 1 L.C.G. (L), 3 L.C.S.s (M) were to land at H-hour.

(C) The remaining companies and battalion headquarters would land in 21 L.C.A.s and 2 L.C.M.s, led by M.L. No. 5 twenty minutes later and beach, as ordered by the senior military officer.

#### Sugar Assault

(A) The 2nd Canadian Brigade would be landed in two flights in Sugar sector. The Seaforths on Amber beach and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry on Green beach.

(B) Four companies in 12 L.C.A.s, led by M.L. No. 2, supported by a destroyer (B), 2 L.C.G.s (L), 3 L.C.S.s (M) would land at H-hour.

(C) The remaining companies and battalion headquarters would land in 18 L.C.A.s and 1 L.C.M., led by M.L. No. 3, would follow 20 minutes later and beach as ordered by the senior military officer.

#### 37. THE ASSAULT CONVOYS—PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS

The military force in convoy K.M.F. 18 sailed from the Clyde on 28th June, and passed Europa Point at 0430, 5th July. The sole incident of note during its outward passage occurred on 6th July, when, having reached a position ahead of its schedule in  $36^{\circ} 46' N.$ ,  $1^{\circ} 24' E.$ , course was reversed for a time. While the escorting vessels were taking up fresh screening positions, the *Whimbrel* and *Cygnets* made a promising attack on a U-Boat, which had been following the convoy and which may have been the same U-Boat that had attacked convoy K.M.S. 18 on 4th July.

At 1018, 9th July, convoy K.M.S. 18, which had sailed from the United Kingdom on 27th June, was sighted in  $34^{\circ} 40' N.$ ,  $14^{\circ} 24' E.$ . Four M.T. ships and the R.F.A. *Derwentdale*, required for early unloading, were detached to join convoy K.M.F. 18.

#### Loss of three M.T. Ships in Convoy K.M.S. 18B

The only successful attempt by the enemy to interfere with the outward-bound convoys was made by submarines, on convoys K.M.S. 18B. At 2052, 4th July, in  $36^{\circ} 44' N.$ ,  $1^{\circ} 25' E.$  (north-east of Cape Tenez), the *City of Venice* was hit forward on her starboard side by a torpedo. The tug *Restive* stood by her, but she caught fire and sank during the night. Later at 2145, in  $36^{\circ} 45' N.$ ,  $1^{\circ} 34' E.$ , the convoy was attacked again and the *St. Essylt*, laden with petrol and explosives, was torpedoed; she caught fire and sank after several explosions.

A third attack was made at 1541, 5th July, in  $37^{\circ} 02' N.$ ,  $3^{\circ} 52' E.$  (north of Cape Bengut). The *Devis* (Commodore H. T. England) was hit by one or possibly two torpedoes. A fierce fire broke out, causing several explosions of ammunition. The *Devis* was abandoned in orderly fashion, and sank stern first in 20 minutes. Survivors, including the Commodore, were picked up by the *Cleveland* and landed at Bougie. Commodore England returned to the convoy and resumed command in the *Fort Stager*. In all three cases there was no warning of attack, and all searches by the escort vessels and destroyers sent out from Algiers were unsuccessful.

#### Approach of the Assault Convoys

(Ref. Plans 3, 8)

The fast assault convoy (K.M.F. 18), after passing through position  $34^{\circ} 55' N.$ ,  $14^{\circ} 40' E.$  (K.O.) was timed to arrive at the release position (C.F.) at H — 130 minutes. Before dark on D — 1 it was joined by the L.C.I.s (L), H.D.M.L.s, M.M.S.s, and L.C.T.s. The ancillary craft for close support were to join at the release position at H — 140 minutes.

The slow assault convoy (K.M.S. 18), after passing through position  $35^{\circ} 00' N.$ ,  $14^{\circ} 16' E.$ , was joined by the fleet minesweepers *Hazard*, *Sharpshooter*, *Hebe*, and *Speedy*.

Detailed orders were issued concerning the procedure of the fast assault convoy and supporting force from 1800, D — 1, also for the formation, movements and stations of the ships, sweeping M.L.s and screening forces. Paravanes were to be streamed before reaching the 200-fathom line.

#### Follow-up Convoys

Certain personnel and M.T. ships of convoys K.M.S. 19 and K.M.F. 19, forming the follow-up convoy for Bark West known as Force "X", would arrive off the maintenance beaches on D + 3. The remaining ships of the above-named convoys carrying the tank brigade, personnel, stores and equipment for other ports and destinations would be known as Force "Y" and would be routed by the Commander-in-Chief.